



The Scarlet Letter

Nathaniel Hawthorne



READING LOG:

- Work on this while you read since I will collect work after every THIRD chapter, not when you finish the whole book (see below for the EIGHT due dates). Late responses are worth half-credit until I return the same chapters' work. After, they are worth zero points— stay on schedule!
- Write a total of EIGHT reading log entries for the twenty-four chapters.

GENERAL INSTRUCTIONS

- Review the topics on the back with us in class and ask if you have questions.
- For each group of three chapters, make three columns on a piece of paper (two wide ones, one thin middle column).
- As you read, collect five quotes from these three chapters that address the topics. Copy each quote in the first column and cite the page number in the second, thin column.
- Document the letter(s) of the topic(s) the quote addresses in the second column. (Ex: Write 'C' if the quote fits CHARACTER CHANGES.) You may cover several topics in one chapter; you may also repeat topics as often as you like.
- In the third column, describe why you chose the quote. HOW and WHY does it fit the topic? Go beyond "surface-level," obvious answers and always write this part in two to three complete sentences.

SCORING

I'll score each of your quote/responses according to these criteria:

- ✓+ Response includes all assigned elements and makes an especially insightful and/or well-explained connection between the quote and topic. **(3 points)**
- ✓ Response includes all assigned elements and convincingly connects the quote to a topic. **(2 points)**
- ✓- Response is missing assigned elements and/or does not convincingly connect the quote to a topic. **(1 point)**

The points possible will be the most points earned by a student on that chapter group (usually between 10 and 15 points).

READING SCHEDULE & DUE DATES

ON THIS DAY . . .

TUESDAY 9/27 (A)

WEDNESDAY 9/28 (B)

THURSDAY 9/29

FRIDAY 9/30

MONDAY 10/3

TUESDAY 10/4

WEDNESDAY 10/5

THURSDAY 10/6

FRIDAY 10/7

MONDAY 10/10

TUESDAY 10/11

WEDNESDAY 10/12

THURSDAY 10/13

FRIDAY 10/14

MONDAY 10/17

TUESDAY 10/18

WEDNESDAY 10/19

MONDAY 10/24

TUESDAY 10/25

WEDNESDAY 10/26

THURSDAY 10/27

MONDAY 10/31

TUESDAY 11/1

WEDNESDAY 11/2

THURSDAY 11/3

FRIDAY 11/4

READ . . .

In-class: chapter 1

At home: chapter 2

In-class: chapter 3, work on reading logs

At home: chapters 4-6, reading log

In-class: ch. 7

At home: ch. 8

In-class: chapter analysis 1-8

At home: play with your pets, watch TV, take your little brother for ice cream . . .

In-class: finish analysis? ch. 9

At home: ch. 9? reading log

In-class: class discussion, ch. 10

At home: chs. 11 & 12, reading log

In-class: CONFESSIONS!

At home: chs. 13 & 14

In-class: ch. 15, reading log

At home: type confessions, ch. 16

In-class: confessions

At home: ch. 17

In-class: ch. 18, reading logs

At home: chs. 19 & 20

In-class: chapter analysis 9-18

At home: ch. 21, reading log

In-class: finish analysis? ch. 22

At home: ch. 23

In-class: ch. 24, reading log

& TURN IN . . .

READING LOG #1 (chs. 1-3)

(**END** of class)

READING LOG #2 chs. 4-6

(**FIRST** of class)

READING LOG #3 chs. 7-9

(**FIRST** of class)

READING LOG #4 chs. 10-12

(**FIRST** of class)

READING LOG #5 chs. 13-15

(**END** of class)

Confessions!

(**FIRST** of class)

READING LOG #6 chs. 16-18

(**END** of class)

READING LOG #7 ch. 19-21

(**FIRST** of class)

READING LOG #8 chs. 22-24

(**END** of class)

TOPICS

- A. Hawthorne raises questions of sin and guilt, but does not openly pass clear judgment on specific characters. Instead the reader must see the sins and guilt of the characters and arrive at his or her own conclusions.
CONSIDER ☞ Who is the most guilty: Hester Prynne, Arthur Dimmesdale, or Roger Chillingworth?
- B. The parent-child relationship is a common theme and subject in literature. Hester and Pearl have an unusual relationship, possibly reflective or symbolic of the relationship's origin.
CONSIDER ☞ How would you define the relationship between Hester and her daughter Pearl?
- C. While the characters in the novel are somewhat flat and symbolic, they are not static (unchanging). Observe the moments of change in these characters.
CONSIDER ☞ How does Hester (Dimmesdale, or Chillingworth) change as the story unfolds? What are we to learn from their transformations?
- D. A literary symbol is not a mere representation. Rather, it is some character, image, or object which has plura-signitive value. In other words, the symbol literally plays an important role in the work, but it also represents other ideas or experiences to the novel. Watch for symbols in the novel.
CONSIDER ☞ What is the symbol's literal contribution to the novel? How does its symbolic value develop?
- E. With the sense of a visual artist, Hawthorne paints the story of *The Scarlet Letter* using light and dark, color and shadow to create a picture of Puritan Boston and its inhabitants. Watch for meaningful examples of color imagery.
CONSIDER ☞ Discuss the symbolism of the color imagery in *The Scarlet Letter*.
- F. How does irony – when the opposite of what you expect to happen, happens–play a role in the novel? Explore Hawthorne's ironic treatment of a character, scene, or symbol.
CONSIDER ☞ Why would the author handle this material with irony?
- G. The novel is a moral tale, but at the same time, it presents several ambiguous lessons. The text of a literary masterpiece will so resonate with meaning that a reader might encounter many possible, even conflicting, interpretations of the work. Watch for moments in the novel that create ambiguity for you (a scene, a setting, a symbol, a character).
CONSIDER ☞ In a novel set in such a strict, “good vs. evil” setting, why would the author create such ambiguity?
- H. Focus on a contrasting idea in the novel (sin/redemption, male/female, powerlessness/empowerment, realism/imagination, light/dark).
CONSIDER ☞ Why is the contrast important to the themes of the novel?
- J. One of my favorite lines in the novel is this: “No man can wear one face to the multitude and another to himself without becoming bewildered as to which may be true.” Watch for displays of this dual psychological state of one of the characters.
CONSIDER ☞ What is the impact and perhaps the confusion that results from a discrepancy between the public and the private face?
- K. Hawthorne chose Puritan Boston during the 1640's for the setting of his novel. How does he seem to feel about Puritanism? Look for examples in his tone (attitude) by closely examining his treatment of one of the following aspects of the novel: a character, a setting, or a symbol.
CONSIDER ☞ Puritan America, though a particular time and place in American history, still affected Hawthorne's society and still resonates in ours. Why is the novel still applicable to our very different time and place?
- L. Critic Nina Baym has commented that “in the interweaving of choice and fate, the novel approaches tragedy.” If tragedy revolves around a tragic error/choice made by the protagonist that leads to the protagonist's unavoidable (fated) punishment, who is the tragic figure of the novel and how do choice and fate interweave to create his/her downfall? Document moments where characters seem to make their own fate.
CONSIDER ☞ Which element, choice or fate, seems most strong in the lives of these characters? Which do you believe in most strongly? How does our society “interweave” beliefs in choice and fate?